

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**A WALK FOR HISTORY:  
MUSEUM OFFICIALS ATTEMPT “JOURNEY OF DEATH”**

*Santa Fe, NM*—Next month, two officials from the Museum of New Mexico will walk 75 miles of *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* (The Royal Road to the Interior Lands) in an extraordinary effort to bring attention to two vital projects at the Museum: expansion of the Palace of the Governors and completion of El Camino Real International Heritage Center.

On Tuesday, October 17, Tom Wilson, 52, interim director of the Museum of New Mexico and Mike Romero Taylor, 49, assistant director of New Mexico State Monuments will set out on foot for a four-day, three-night hike on “The Royal Road,” crossing tough terrain through heavy washes and bordering rugged mountain ranges. Wilson and Taylor have been training seriously for this trek, a campaign for much needed support for these key Museum of New Mexico initiatives.



Tom Wilson and Mike Taylor

The particular segment that the two officials will walk is the “Jornada del Muerto” from just north of Las Cruces to just south of Socorro. The “Journey of the Dead One” (literally translated) is a legendary 75-mile stretch of extremely dangerous waterless desert that has been chronicled by travelers since the 16th century.

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For hundreds of years before the Spaniards arrived in the New World and used the 1,800 mile long road themselves, Native Americans traveled the trade route that extends from Mexico City through Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, on to El Paso del Norte, up the Rio Grande Valley and finally into Santa Fe.

#### Expansion of the Palace of the Governors

“We are walking the Jornada del Muerto,” stated Wilson, “to call attention to the extraordinarily rich history and diverse cultures of New Mexico. We ask all New Mexicans to support our “Walk for History” by voting ‘yes’ on Bond Issue C in November. This will provide \$8.5 million in general obligation bonds for the expansion and preservation of the Palace of the Governors and New Mexico’s priceless treasures.”

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Palace of Governors was built in 1610 and is the oldest public building in continuous use in the United States. The adobe brick Palace was the first major structure in what became the City of Santa Fe. It served as the seat of government for nearly three centuries during Spanish, Mexican and American periods. Congress already has pledged \$10 million for the Palace project, under an agreement reached by House and Senate negotiators on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Senator Pete Domenici, R-NM, is seeking another \$5 million for this initiative.

Wilson and Taylor hope to draw support from voters for the final design, construction, furnishing and equipping of the state history museum that will be located behind the historic Palace of Governors at 110 Lincoln Avenue in Santa Fe. The Palace of the Governors was the northern terminal of El Camino Real.

#### El Camino Real International Heritage Center

El Camino Real International Heritage Center will highlight the pivotal role the major trade route played in southwest and United States history. The site of the planned state monument is within view of the Camino Real, midway between Socorro and Truth or Consequences with groundbreaking planned for 2001. To ensure completion, another \$1.5 million more is needed for exhibition and landscaping design.

Already, \$3.7 million in federal and state funds are in hand to build the center: \$2.5 million from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and \$1.2 million from the State of New Mexico. The BLM is in partnership with Museum of New Mexico State Monuments to operate the center after it opens.

Exhibitions at El Camino Real International Heritage Center will interpret the history of *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* and its importance to the region. During the 17th and 18th centuries one of the primary functions of El Camino Real was to supply the Spanish missions along the route. With the founding of Albuquerque and Chihuahua City early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the trail grew to be a trade and supply route. After the independence of Mexico in 1821 and with the development of the Santa Fe Trail, El Camino Real and the Santa Fe Trail were the major trade and commerce links from Missouri all the way to Mexico City.

*El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* continued as a major trade route after the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), until the 1880s when the railroad linked Santa Fe to Chihuahua City. The center will also serve as a hub for other museums and agencies up and down the Camino (including Mexico) to exchange traveling exhibits and to interpret and preserve various segments of the historic trail.

For more information on how to support this important campaign, please call Mike Taylor at (505) 476-5015.

#### Tom Wilson and Mike Romero Taylor

Wilson and Taylor are expecting vast distances and cold nights in Dona Anã, Sierra and Socorro counties. Beyond the historical and political significance, there are personal connections to southern New Mexico for the museum officials: Wilson grew up in Alamogordo; Taylor is from Mesilla and has strong ties to El Camino Real, his great grandfather and great-great grandfather having owned a freight business that ran up and down the same route he will hike. Taylor's father is Representative J. Paul Taylor of Mesilla, and is a strong supporter of cultural initiatives such as El Camino Real International Heritage Center. Taylor's Hispanic background in New Mexico goes back to the first European colonizing effort in the Southwest by Juan de Oñate in 1598. His mother has researched original documents pertaining to the history of southern New Mexico for the last 40 years. Both parents have written articles relating to El Camino Real in a volume recently published by the Bureau of Land Management.

Mike Taylor graduated from Las Cruces High School (1968) and New Mexico State University with degrees in Anthropology (1975) and Spanish (1981). In 1987, he studied architectural conservation in Rome at ICCROM (International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). He currently serves on the board of El Rancho de Las Golondrinas, a living history museum south of Santa Fe. Most of Taylor's career has been spent working for the Museum of New Mexico State Monuments division and the National Park Service in historic site management and historic structures preservation.

A native of New Mexico, Tom Wilson graduated from Alamogordo High School (1966) and the University of New Mexico (1970). Wilson earned a Ph.D. in Mesoamerican archaeology from the University of California, Berkeley. He served as Deputy Director of the Museum for African Art in New York, Director of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, and Director of the Wright Museum of Art and the Logan Museum of Anthropology at Beloit College in Wisconsin. He was recently appointed Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico.

Their journey will begin in Rincon, New Mexico, on Tuesday, October 17, and end at Paraje Wells. Two **press conferences** are scheduled, one before Wilson and Taylor start, on Monday, October 16, at 3 p.m. at Fort Selden State Monument, and another after they finish, on Friday, October 20, at the proposed site of El Camino Real International Heritage Center.

For more information or directions, please call Barbara Hagood at (505) 476-5105. Wilson and Taylor will be available by cell phone (505) 690-1415 on Wednesday, October 18, from 5 to 8 pm, to give mid-trek accounts of their adventure.

*The Palace of the Governors and New Mexico State Monuments are part of the Museum of New Mexico, a division of the state Office of Cultural Affairs.*

<http://www.museumofnewmexico.org/>

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